

To: Avon Hill NCD Boundary Study Committee

From: Sally Zimmerman, Preservation Planner

Re: History of Raymond Street

Date: February 6, 2006

This memo lays out the background and development history of Raymond Street, in partial fulfillment of the study of the boundary of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District and provides the staff recommendation on the issue of the inclusion of Raymond Street in the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District.

I. Justification of the Raymond Street Boundary in the Original 1998 Study Report

As the original Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District Final Study Report (1998) stated, Raymond Street is one of the oldest roads in Cambridge and provided access from the earliest “Newtowne” settlement center in Harvard Square to the “Great Swamp”, a low-lying area between Fresh Pond and Alewife Brook. The street, including all of the properties on the east side of the street from Linnaean Street north to Upland Road, and on the west side from 2 Gray Gardens East north to Upland Road, was within the original area petitioned for study in 1997. Also included were the properties on the cross street at West Bellevue and Bellevue avenues.

The only modification recommended in the original study boundaries was the removal of the property at 2 Gray Gardens East (1930, Duguid & Martin), based on the owners’ opposition and because the property was more prominently connected to the 1922 planned subdivision of Gray Gardens East and West, also not included in the study area.

It is standard practice to include properties along both sides of a street within an area being regulated. It is also standard practice to use the rear property line to delineate the extent of the area being regulated. The Raymond Street and West Bellevue Avenue boundary line of the Avon Hill NCD was delineated following these practices and in recognition of the historical contribution of the street to the development of the Avon Hill neighborhood.

II. Historical Development Pattern: Raymond Street/West Bellevue Avenue:

Laid out in the 1630s, Raymond Street, called the Highway to the New West Field, ran northwest from the northern boundary of the Cambridge Common, defined by present-day Linnaean Street, alongside the fields of the New West Field, a 1638 subdivision that

partitioned Jones (now Avon) Hill, into twenty-four small farms. As such, Raymond Street is an important artifact of the neighborhood's historical development and, along with Linnaean Street and Massachusetts Avenue, one of the district's earliest cultural features.

Despite its age, Raymond Street was not developed until the 1840s, after railroad service was introduced at Porter Square in 1843, an event that opened the entire surrounding area to residential development. Two early houses remain on Raymond Street from this nascent development period: the Greek Revival house at 49 Linnaean Street (corner of Raymond), built in 1847 for the retired head gardener of the Botanic Gardens, and the house at 87 Raymond Street, built in 1846-47 for George Wyatt, a brickmaker. Other than the 1682-83 Cooper-Frost-Austin House at 21 Linnaean Street, the two Raymond Street properties are the earliest surviving houses in the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District as a whole.

Raymond Street was widened in 1856 by taking a portion of the Botanic Garden on its west side, and accepted as a public way. It acquired its present name at that time, named for Zebina L. Raymond, mayor of Cambridge in 1855 and 1864. Two more large houses were constructed soon after the street widening: the mansard/Italianate Henry Fuller House at 79 Raymond Street, built in 1857, and the 1859 Jonas Wyeth house (demolished, 1922) on the site of 60 Raymond Street. The Wyeth House, later owned by Edwin Dresser, stood in an estate which, when sold by the Dresser heirs, was developed as Gray Gardens East. The Fuller House preserves an indication of the scale of the properties on Raymond Street prior to the 1880s.

The next phase of Raymond Street's development occurred in the 1880s, as Upland Road was graded from Washington Avenue west to Raymond Street (1888); a new street, Bellevue Avenue, to the east of Raymond Street, was laid out in 1884 by Charles Mason, a civil engineer whose father, William A. Mason, an important land surveyor in Cambridge, had owned the house at 87 Raymond Street since 1851.

Inspired by his success, Mason laid out West Bellevue Avenue in 1889, the two streets connecting across Raymond and Avon Hill streets and terminating in cul-de-sacs. The houses at 77 Raymond (1888, demolished or possibly substantially remodeled in 1938), at 5 West Bellevue (1889) and an 1840 house moved from 25 Follen Street to 9 West Bellevue in 1889, were the forerunners of a building boom that took place in the 1890s. Those structures ushered in the next phase of development on Raymond Street, which saw the top of the hill filled in with Queen Anne and Colonial Revival style houses. Dating from this phase of the street's development are 84 Raymond (1891), 98 and 106 Raymond and 6 West Bellevue Avenue (all 1892), 90 and 95 Raymond (both 1896), and 103-105 Raymond and 10 West Bellevue (both 1898). An outlier of this trend was 47 Raymond Street (1893), constructed for a Boston high school teacher on land acquired from the Dresser family.

The last component of the street to open for development was the land of Charles W. Cook, a Boston real estate broker who purchased a 2.5 acre field at the bottom of the hill

from the heirs of Jacob Bates (1788-1861) and who laid out Bates Street in 1886. The houses at 17 and 21 Bates (1886) were built immediately thereafter, and in 1905, the three-unit house at 32-34 Bates/29 Raymond Street. Several years after Cook's death in 1916, the land was sold and additional sections of the Cook land were developed with the construction of 15 Raymond (1922), 27 Raymond (1925), 31 Bates/35 Raymond (1926), and the large apartment building at 41-43 Linnaean Street (1922).

The Gray Gardens East development saw the construction of 60 and 72 Raymond (both 1927). Subsequent infill of the one remaining lot on the street (57 Raymond, 1955) and redevelopment of other parcels (102 Raymond, 1892 stable converted to residence, 1953; 77 Raymond, remodeled/rebuilt 1938, expanded 1960) completed the development of Raymond Street and West Bellevue Avenue.

Later alterations of these properties have included construction of garages, porch enclosures, fence construction, modernizations and other modest alterations. No demolition has taken place since the 1922 razing of the Dresser House.

III. Staff Recommendation

From the historical viewpoint, the contribution Raymond Street makes to the history of the Avon Hill neighborhood is clear and incontrovertible: it is one of the original streets of the neighborhood and, along with Linnaean Street and Massachusetts Avenue, integral to the original and subsequent historical development of this section of Cambridge. There is no inherent historical basis for the removal of the entire street from the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District.

The settlement pattern of the street reflects several distinct periods, each with surviving historic structures that are associated with the events and persons responsible for the street's present character and appearance. These periods can be summarized as: 1) 1843-1856, initial settlement related to introduction of rail service at Porter Square, 2) 1856-1889, early suburban estate development, 3) 1889-c. 1916, middle-class suburban residential development, 4) c. 1916-1960, mature suburban development, infill and adaptation. Elements of each period of development exist on the street and contribute to an understanding of the street's architectural and social history.

The one distinct element of Raymond Street's history which could be considered separately from its overall sequence of development from 1843 to the present is the Gray Gardens East subdivision which extends west from Raymond Street's west side between Robinson Street and Huron Avenue. While the Dresser Estate, out of which the Garden Street Trust partitioned the 25 lots of Gray Gardens East in 1922, fronted Raymond Street, the demolition of the Wyeth-Dresser House at 60 Raymond Street and the wholesale and uniform redevelopment of the estate by the Garden Street Trust, set it apart from the rest of Raymond Street.

In the 1998 Final Study Report, 2 Gray Gardens East was excluded from the Avon Hill NCD in part on the basis that it was architecturally and historically most connected with the Gray Gardens development and substantially less so with the Avon Hill neighborhood

as a whole. Consideration could be given to the exclusion of three other properties developed as part of Gray Gardens East: 1 Gray Gardens East (1925, A. Hilding Hanson) and 60 and 72 Raymond Street (both, 1927, Putnam & Cox), lots 11, 13 and 14 of the Garden Street Trust plan.

The staff recommend that the Raymond Street boundary of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District be amended to exclude the three properties at 1 Gray Gardens East and 60 and 72 Raymond Street (assessors' map 207, parcels 68, 63 and 64) on the basis that the two Raymond Street properties and the property at 1 Gray Gardens East are integral to the Gray Gardens East subdivision of 1922, a planned development separate and distinct from the overall history and development of the Avon Hill neighborhood.

The staff further recommend that the remaining properties on Raymond Street be retained in the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District as they contain places, structures, features and objects that meet criterion (1) of section 2.78.180 because they are importantly associated with one or more historic persons and events, and with the broad architectural and social history of the city, and criterion (2) of section 2.78.180 because they are historically and architecturally significant in terms of their period and style in the context of a group of structures. In addition, some structures are historically and architecturally significant for their associations with a famous architect or builder.

Specifically, the staff find that the Raymond Street properties are associated with the 17th century settlement patterns of the city of Cambridge, with the 19th-century suburban development of northwest Cambridge that followed the introduction of the railroad to Porter Square in 1843, and with numerous individuals connected with that development, including Edwin Dresser, William A. Mason, Jonas Wyeth, Charles Mason, and Charles Cook.

The staff further find that individual properties, including 49 Linnaean Street and 79 and 87 Raymond Street, are importantly associated by period and style with the earliest development of the street, that additional properties, including 5, 6, 9, and 10 West Bellevue, 47, 84, 95, 98, 102, 103-105, and 106 Raymond Street are associated by period and style with the period of middle-class suburban development of the street, and that 15, 27, 29, 35, 57, 77 and 102 Raymond Street are associated by period and style with the period of mature suburban development, infill and adaptation of the street.

In addition, several properties, including 15, 27, 29, 35, 77, 79, 90, 95, 98, and 103-105 Raymond Street are associated with famous architects and builders in Cambridge, including E. K. & W. E. Blaikie, Arthur Brooks, Frederick Bruck, Frost & Raymond, Hamilton Harlow, Lois Lilley Howe, Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley, R. Clipston Sturgis, and C.F. Willard.

IV. Inventory of Properties in the Raymond Street Petition Area

1 Gray Gardens East	1925, A. Hilding Hanson
49 Linnaean St	1847
15 Raymond St	1922, Lois Lilley Howe

27 Raymond St	1925, Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley
29 Raymond/32-34 Bates	1905, R. Clipston Sturgis
35 Raymond St/31 Bates	1926, Hamilton Harlow
47 Raymond St	1893, Russell Snow
57 (55) Raymond St	1955, Paul Sgro
77 Raymond St	1888?, 1938, 1960- Frederick Bruck
79 Raymond St	1857, 1923-Frost & Raymond, garage, 1956- Arthur Brooks
87 Raymond St	1846, 1867, 1988
95 Raymond St	1896, E.K. & W.E. Blaikie
103-105 Raymond St	1898, E.K. & W.E. Blaikie
60 Raymond St	1927, Putnam & Cox
72 Raymond St	1927, Putnam & Cox
84 Raymond St	1891, Freeman & Harlow
90 Raymond St	1896, C.F. Willard
98 Raymond St	1892, C.F. Willard
102 Raymond St	1892, 1953
106 Raymond St	1892, F.B. Furbish
5 West Bellevue Ave	1889
6 West Bellevue Ave	1892
9 West Bellevue Ave	1840-25 Follen St, moved 1889
10 West Bellevue Ave	1898